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NIGHT AND MORNING

NIGHT & MORNING

BY
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NIGHT AND MORNING

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“Love is the Interpreter and Mediator between God and Man.”—PLATO.

THE ARGUMENT



SELF-DEVELOPMENT is the Shibboleth of the hour. When souls awaken, they are counselled by our modern masters to find fulfilment of life at any cost—that self may be developed.

Tradition—law—order—are outworn ceremonies to be cut with haste in the zeal of emancipation.

“He Who Breaks a Law is Greater Than He Who Makes It.”

A modern gospel is preached from the spirit of that text; and awakened souls—especially, when they awake to Love—construct from it a philosophy of life, a new code of conduct.

From these seeds progress waxes. The free thought of To-day, measured by the stifled thought of Yesterday, is, of course, progress.

But woe be to that progress which takes itself as its own finality! Which forgets in the achievement of the COMPARATIVE the triumphant SUPERLATIVE!

It is indeed true that he who *breaks* a law is greater than he who *makes* it—if the *making* comes from motives conventional—selfish, worldly, traditional, narrowing; if the *keeping* comes from fear and bondage to convention; if the *breaking* comes from courage, emancipation and dauntless dedication to self-development.

Self-development is, undoubtedly, the obligation of each soul—but the self in man is *triune*—body, mind, spirit,—and must have a *triune development*.

Life is not merely the little span of three-score years and ten; life is the evolution of æons, moving to ultimate harmony. Self-development has wider measurements than the temporary balances of To-day.

May not the "withheld completion" of the immortal spiritual life, retard more a complete development of a triune immortal being than the "withheld completions" of mortality?

It is somewhat the fashion, when Love calls a man or woman—living in the loneliness of an uncongenial marriage—to quickly cut the binding bonds and go with Love—leaving pain and suffering behind—leaving the husband or the wife, who still loves, alone—bereft; and children, for whose existence there is a supreme responsibility, motherless or fatherless—leaving a home, wherein obligations have been assumed, with work undone, obligations unfulfilled, often for no reason save that the fulfilment is uncon-

genial, the temper incompatible—and because Love compels. This course is condemned or approved from two extreme points of difference.

On the one hand, it is called sin—on the other hand, it is called emancipation, freedom from bondage, life; and love is called “Lawful Love”—“Unlawful Love” or “Free Love”—as it conforms or does not conform to the Laws of the State and the Canons of the Church.

The old argument between the Radical and the Conservative goes on. The Conservative Moralists clamours for stricter legislation concerning marriage, maintaining that Law should control Love; all this is practically in vain, for the stricter laws do not seem to bring stricter conduct.

Laws of the State and Canons of the Church must always be in vain to safeguard an uncongenial home—where Love is dead—from the oversweeping tide of a great Love, which is

alive. No living thing can be long bound from *without*.

If Love is to be a beneficence, a constructive not a destructive force, in the community, if its mission is that of "Interpreter and Mediator between God and Man"—there is but one law which can hold it to fulfil its destiny—and that is the *higher inner* law of Love itself which, in itself, is highest freedom.

This law is not a Negation but an Affirmation—in truth, it is a Beatitude rather than a Law—it cannot be broken, for it is the very heart of a great Love. It does not lessen but magnifies Love—for Love must become more heroic in proportion to its heroism, more God-like in proportion to its triunity.

The very logic of Love should protect Love from failing in its highest destiny. No Love, which is not supreme, can hold an excuse for broken law—deserted homes—devastated lives ;

and the love which is supreme must be triune, and therefore held in poise by the spiritual law within itself.

It is the suggestion of this inner law—or beatitude of Love and Life—which is the argument of “NIGHT AND MORNING.”

NIGHT



NIGHT



THE Syrian night enwrapped Jeru-
salem

With soothing rest, unfolding
from the dark—

The wondrous night which dowers the ample East
Wherein the vaulted vast of heaven unrolls,
In spaces infinite, of mystic blue
Made palpitant with stars; and all the deeps
Of darkness—of the earth—and of the sky—
Are fraught with beauty of the Orient.

Cool and beneficent the tranquil night,
After the day-long shining of the sun;
In balmy sleep, beneath its spreading wings,
Man had forgot awhile his weary toil.

The busy world was hushed ; soft silence
 reigned,

Save for those sounds mysterious which haunt
The night with ghostly echoings, when beasts
And creeping things, that hide themselves by
 day,

Come from their hiding—and upon the wind
Are gently borne melodious whisperings
From some far secret places of the dark.

The frowning Fortress of Antonia
Loomed grimly on its battlemented hill ;
And twenty furlongs from its base there stood
The home of Eleazar, of the tribe
Of Judah, a relentless Pharisee.

The low Judean house, of rough-hewn stone,
Rose in the darkness white and windowless,
Like some pale shade remembering the past.

The lintel of the tomb-like entrance-door
Was crossed with fading stains of paschal blood ;
And, on the broad and massive threshold-stone
A melancholy, brooding shadow lay.

Beyond the sycomore and olive trees
A flight of steps, cut in the terraced hill,
Made a descent to an encircling wall,
Moss-grown and jasmine-hung. There, deep-
enclosed,
A garden lay—luxuriant, beautiful.
The rigid Eleazar seldom passed
Into that close of fragrant blossoming ;
Gardens were naught to him but foolishness ;
This one, for his ancestral pride, he spared—
His great forefather planned and planted it.

It was a garden of deliciousness ;
Ambrosial fruits and dreamy-scented flowers

Abandoned were to unimpeded growth.
Upon a bank a cedar tree uprose,
A mighty cedar tree of Lebanon ;
And underneath its boughs two lovers sat.
Behind the lovers gloomed the umbrose grove—
Purpled with sombre evening shadows now—
Which in the noontide sun was emerald-hued.

The open garden broke in bosky dells
And dappled greenery, and rioted
In all the flowers mysterious of the East—
Love-freighted roses, hiding their deep hearts
Beneath close-folding petals, till the hour
For their fulfilment comes, then giving all
With open-hearted fragrance to the wind,—
The wayside lilies, regal coloured, gold
And saffron-toned,—the maiden lilies white
As orient pearl, dainty as gossamer—
And passionate flowers, iris-formed and tall,
Heavy with perfume, tassel-hung with red.

It was, in truth, a very paradise—
Of roses, lilies, and innumerable flowers,
Of myrtle, palms, and trees o'erhung with fruit—
In wanton fulness of fair summer bloom,
Sleep-folded now in benison of dew.

The mystery of the Oriental night
Rested upon the garden like a spell ;
The ambient air with Unseen Things was stirred,
And the low music of the moving trees
Sang to the heart. The penetrating stars
And the majestic mistress of the night—
Fair silver-sandalled moon—on her slow way
Across the spacious sky—looked down between
The boughs that parted to the passing breeze
Perfumed with breath of blossom and of rose,
Of aloe and acacia-trees in bloom,
And all the pungent odours of the night.
From time to time, the amorous nightingale

Poured forth his poignant melody of song,
And plashing waters echoed through the dusk.

Softly the lovers spoke with ears attuned
To slightest sound that perilled their delight :
For no man knew their secret. In the world
They needs must move in separate ways, apart,
Nor let the wordless message of their eyes
Betray their love.

Alone, at last, inwreathed
By friendly cedarn shadow they had met—
Leonidas, the brave imperious Greek,
And laughter-loving Miriam, the wife
Of Eleazar, the stern Pharisee.

Low words were murmured to the waiting lips
In languorous pauses from each silent kiss.
“ Beloved Miriam, the gods be praised !
After long time, beholding from afar,

Mine arms enfold thee : my impatient heart
Doth leap like a young roe at touch of thee.
Thou fairest of Earth's daughters, light and love
Were mingled in thy making ; yea, great Zeus
Hath dowered thee with heavenly heritage."

" Now hide me in the shadow, I am here
In answer to thy call, Leonidas.
Long have I wrestled with this fatal love—
Which burneth ever in my heart—and prayed
That God would take it from me. Woe—ah,
 woe !

He hath not heard my prayer nor answered it.
To-night it over-mastereth me : plead now
My cause, Beloved, with this Still Small Voice
Which ever crieth, here, within my soul
Against my coming, and my thirst for thee."

" O star-eyed, violet-fragrant Miriam !
I would but plead for truest righteousness.

Love hath sure warrant for all deeds on earth ;
Great Zeus himself defied all laws for love ;
Yea, laws that he first made, he straightway broke
When love compelling did possess his heart—
And lesser gods but followed in his course.”

“Peace, O Leonidas ! I hush thy lips ;
I may not hearken to such blasphemy.
I know not Zeus—nor any lesser God—
There are no Gods in heaven save only One,
Jehovah, Lord, the God of Israel,
Whose work is absolute. He cutteth down
The wicked in their sin ; I fear Him ; nay,
I dare not linger with thee ; let me go ;
O thou whom my soul loveth, let me go !”

He caught her lips, retreating, with a kiss
That held her in a tremulous sweet trance
Of ecstasy, the while he murmured low,
“Jehovah, Zeus,—yea, call Him what thou wilt—

Thy God, or mine, or both, have led thee forth
From bondage to the liberty of love,
From ignorance to wisdom, Miriam.
Look in thy heart! Doth it not speak to thee
A deeper language, a diviner tongue?"

"All things are more divine, Leonidas,
Since I have loved thee,—and am loved by thee—
All things with deeper meaning are replete.
I seem to know the secrets of the earth;
And all its mysteries have merged to this—
The alternate wonder of the nights and days,
The varying seasons' ever-changing roll,—
Spring in her joyance—Summer in her pride—
Fruit-bearing Autumn—and pure Winter clear—
Have waited on to-night.

O Night benign!

Thy shadows are like soft and sheltering wings
That fold us into blessedness and peace.

Hark—Hark! I hear the music of the stars—
We stand before the portal of high heaven.”

Leonidas embraced her willing hand.

“And this fair fragrant hand doth guard the key.
Behold! The portal waits—and Athens waits—
High on its amaranthine hill—to hail
My Miriam. Love’s banners shall be spread
To welcome her who comes upon the sea
To her new home of laughter, love and light.
Then will proud Athens set the banquet forth—
Fair nectar and fresh manna, as is meet.
When men of Athens see thy fashioning,
And mark the movements of thy rhythmic grace,
Thy midnight-beauty’s sovereignty, amid
Their pallid women, they will say, indeed,
Some goddess from beyond the starry dome
Hath deigned to tread the common ways of men;
Then will they give thee homage.

Come, my Love.

My eager boat is moored at Askelon,

Her sail is folded in expectancy.

Come, let us leave this sombre prison-house.

The night grows late. Now will the darkness
hide

Our going hence—grey clouds conceal the
moon—

Before they break, she will have sunk and left

The path before us darkened for our flight.

What time Aurora traverses the sky

We must be out beyond Jerusalem,

Where—in a hidden tangle of tall trees—

My camels bide to speed us on our way

To the great port, beside the glistening sea—

Which leads—a sapphire way—to beauteous
Greece ;

There will my unfurled sail salute thee. Come !”

“ To Greece—Leonidas—with thee—alone ? ”

“ With me, my Miriam, but not alone ;
Love shall be pilot, courier and guide,
As thitherward we go ; and when we gain
Those opalescent shores, then Love shall be
Thy tender father and thy fostering nurse,
Thy husband and thy shield.”

“ Leonidas,
I fear thee,” Miriam whispered, “ but I fear
My heart the more—how can it tell thee nay ? ”

His pleading voice was softly intertoned
With tender cadences and wooing notes—
“ Thou hast declared high mysteries are near,
The Infinite made manifest through love.
Can aught that lifts the veil from God be wrong ?
Nay, my sweet Syrian, it could not be.”

Backward she drew, and rose, confronting him,
Her arms outstretched as though in him to seek
A refuge from herself.

“Oh—verily!

With unveiled head I seem to stand between
The rushing tempest and the whirling wind—
I know not what I say nor what I think—
But this *one* truth abideth clear to me—
Jehovah the Omnipotent is just ;
He gave to man His statutes and His laws ;
Obedience is more than argument.
Wherefore to thee for solace did I come—
Into the darkness of the tempting night,
To meet thy luring words of reasoning ?
Farewell, Leonidas, I flee from thee
To hide my yielding heart behind the bars
Of Eleazar's house. Farewell—my Love—”

Swiftly, his arms enfolded her once more—
“Nay, hide thee, Miriam, upon my breast.
Remember—O my pure and priceless pearl!—
What saith thy Hebrew song? ‘Can waters
quench

Or floods drown love ?' I trow not. 'Can the fire
Consume, or aught destroy ?' Nay, *love is life* ;
Wilt thou then forfeit it for *formal bond* ?
That would be sin. David, the famous King
Of Israel, found favour with your God—
Was he not made after Jehovah's heart ?
Thus have your sacred prophets testified !
He broke the law for love ; yet, unto him—
And unto her with whom the law he broke—
Was born your mighty monarch Solomon.
In truth, no virtuous marriage ever bore
Such fruit as Solomon. His living fame
Illumines the Judean Chronicles ;
His wisdom reaches e'en the schools of Greece."

The shadow of the darkening night concealed
The face of Miriam, quick overspread
With sudden pallor ; deep within her eyes—
Love-luminous—a question flamed—and stayed ;
Her voice was tremulous in answering ;

“No man—was punished—for a carnal sin—
As David, the great King of Israel.”

The subtle Greek Leonidas laughed low.
“Punished—my Miriam? Interpret me
The punishment, when, in the twining arms
Of his Bathsheba, he was comforted
Until he passed unto the gate of death!
With what small measure was it meted them?
Unwelcome warfare and a hope denied
Are but the common lot of every man—
As more than recompense King David kept
His kingship and Bathsheba to the end.
Blest was the sin—if sin it may be called—
Crowned with King Solomon—their royal son—
From whom you boast Messiah is to come.”

At those words Miriam trembled and was still.
Withholding all caress, the wily Greek
Waited in silence.

Deep within the grove,
A nightingale sang to his mate a song
Of passionate calling ; the soft liquid notes
Fell on the languorous Judean night
Like some insistent ecstasy of love.
No word was spoken in the garden then—
Leonidas was fain to leave his plea
Unto the nightingale—and Miriam's heart.

Softly, at last, with yielding hand, she said,—
“Nay, they can feel no penalty or pain
Who meet it side by side ; the Lord was kind
And merciful to David in his sin,
And very merciful to her who gave
Her love—her heart—herself—unto the King ;
He blessed them beyond all the sons of men.
Leonidas, the pangs of death were sweet
To me, and very easy to be borne,
If underneath my head thy hand was laid,
And thou didst comfort and caress me thus.

Yea, all the Afterward—beyond the grave—
Could have no terrors or no gloom for me,
If thou wert there beside me, in the dark.”

His passion curbed by purpose—he replied,
“Then take my comfort, Miriam. Return
No more to bondage formal and austere.
Consider, my Beloved, in the past
What poor reward was thine for sacrifice?”

“My life,” she answered in a tone of scorn,
“Until I met thee, was a fevered drought.
I was not like the women of my land,
Content to be but handmaiden to man ;
To sit in close seclusion at his feet ;
My heart rebelled against the law that shut
My being in a dungeon walled by him ;
Whene’er I heard men thank God they were men,
I wept that I was woman, and I prayed
To be delivered from my bitter lot.

Before the maid a woman had become—
They married me to Eleazar ; nay,
They led me as they lead the bleating lamb—
Poor lamb !—to sacrifice at Passover.
I never loved him ; oft I hated him ;
Wherefore, his stern just heart I strove the
 more
To satisfy in all ; I knew no paths
Of idleness ; my lamp ne'er lacked its oil ;
I rose up early that I well might clothe
My maidens—but I longed to fly afar
As free bird flieth from the fowler's snare.
E'en when the pregnant earth was burgeoning,
And I had fain with lilies of the spring
Danced in the sunlight, singing blithe with
 birds,
I turned my eyes from seeing, taking hold
Of spindle and of distaff, and essayed
To be a virtuous helpmate to my lord.

Had but Jehovah granted me a son,
The sweetness of all sweetness, crushed and
held

Unto my lips to tempt me, had been husks,
For, O Leonidas ! he would have filled
My life, love-hungry and disconsolate ;
But no child came, and Eleazar's heart
Was newly hardened to the barren wife ;
Naught had he ever cared for her beyond
The purposes of his espousals. Dark
Was my pathway, drear and desolate.

Then—

Out of the shadow thy dear presence flashed,
Lighting the darkness like a wedding torch.
Gladdened my heart—although it knew not
why.

No thought had I to love thee ; ah ! no more
Than now I think to love the sun. Thou
cam'st

A stranger, and didst tell me many a tale
Of thy sea-girdled and blue-vaulted land ;
Of beauty-breathing Aphrodite—she
Who rose deep-hearted from the foam-touched
 waves ;

Of Eros and his wingèd arrow tipped
With fateful fire ; and that Athenian maid
Who taught men wisdom—Pallas the divine.”

“ Not tales, my Queen, but essence of my faith
Never so strong as now, since, to my heart,
The fateful arrow brought its plea of truth,
And Aphrodite’s reign is proved more sure
By thine incarnate beauty, where her power
Is made most manifest in thee—thou Pearl
Pure-breasted as the dawn, with slumbering glow
Ineffable, deep-hidden in thy heart.”

“ If thou hadst called at first, Leonidas,
For evermore I should have hidden me

Wise wert thou in thy wooing, O my Friend !
To lead me to thee by an open path ;
Gladly I listened to the melodies
That floated from the sunny shores of Greece ;
And held me tranced for thee. I saw Greece
first,

Then thee who art the very flower of Greece.
Leonidas, Leonidas, my Love,
Thine eyes are like to waters in the dusk
That hold the stars far down ; thy lips like
grapes ;

Thy breath like spice of Araby. Thou art—
O my Athenian ! more like to God—
Although thou know'st Him not—than any man
In Judah's tribe, strong, fearless, undefiled.
Leonidas, I love thee ! Now I joy
To be a woman born and know thy love."

He lifted his attesting hand to heaven—
" And I thank Zeus that thou wert woman born

That I might love thee—love thee—Miriam.
Soon, I will offer an oblation rich
Unto those Sister Spinners of Life's thread
Who brought me hence to thee. Without a
goal,
For an adventurous quest, my sail I spread ;
Without a goal, I steered my joyous barque
Toward the bright East to meet the rising sun—
And knew not why. The unseen hand of Fate
Steered me who steered—and yet, I knew it not—
Until that day I saw thee at thy prayers—
And knew.

Thy Temple then became to me
A place of worship, as I stood and watched
Thy lips and eyes communing with thy God."

"Ah, I remember," Miriam murmured low ;
"And when my prayers were ended, I saw—
thee !

How long, how hard the interminable hours—
The uncompassionate hours—since that day !
But they have found their recompense to-night.
Oh ! Stay me—comfort me—for when, at last,
Thou bid'st me let Love's willing handmaid,
Night,
Lead me to thee, I could not but obey.
The thought for Eleazar stayed me long,
And held me from thine arms—my rightful
home.”

“Thy rightful home,” Leonidas replied.

“The thought for Eleazar stayed thee long,
But, though I urged thee with mine eyes, I
found
No thought for me in thy philosophy—”

“No thought for thee !—*For thee !*—Behold my
heart !

Leonidas, my Love, thou hast prevailed.

Love is of God, and hath its own commands
Above the stony tablets of the Law ;
Its warrant is immutable ; and life
Were foiled in its high purpose to forgo
Fulfilment of Omnipotent decree
Writ clear by God on tablets of the heart.

Take me, Leonidas, to thy strong arms—
Close—close—and fold me from the whole wide
world.

What seemed a sin, when thought of from afar,
Here, by thy side, doth seem a sacrament ;
Taught by thy subtle suasion and thy kiss,
I know thy reasoning—and I yield to it.
Now will I go with thee where'er thou wilt—
To sunny Greece—to dreary Babylon—
Yea, Love, to Sheol—if thy place be there."

THE MIDDLE WATCH

THE MIDDLE WATCH



OUT from the garden, by the secret
gate,
Then passed the twain—Leonidas the Greek,
And Miriam, stern Eleazar's wife.

The branches of the interlacing vine,
Rose-laden, hid the gate—which Miriam knew.
Crushed were the dewy roses to the dust
And broken by the lovers, as they passed.

Beyond the garden, stretching to the South,
The vineyard lay asleep. In the high tower—
Midway between the ancient vineyard walls—
The warder kept his solitary watch

For prowling beasts, for enemies and thieves.
The vineyard must be skirted to evade
This faithful servitor ; his loyalty
To Eleazar peril was to them.

Softly, with indrawn breath and proud heads
bent,
Leonidas and Miriam crept close
Between the drowsy grapes. The branches made
No shadow for their going, the low vines
No sheltering screen. The friendly moon, once
kind,
Espied their flight and treacherous traitor turned,
Flooding the vineyard with betraying light.

Without the vineyard, Freedom beckoned them ;
Within, Fear stalked, a phantom by their side.

A sinuous serpent from its hidden nest
Glided by Miriam the rustling leaves

Seemed to her ears harsh voices, whispering.
A hawk flew upward, and a jackal howled.
With sudden questioning, her hand outreached
To find Leonidas. Despite the fear,
At that warm touch, her heart made haste to sing
A marriage-song of rapture. Now farewell
To prison-house, to bondage, and to bonds!
Now well-nigh won glad freedom and the world!
Naught but that patch of vineyard to be crossed,
And then—the open country and the wood,
Tree-shaded and rock-shadowed for their flight.

The earthen wall, compact of hard-baked clay,
Confronted them—but where to find the gate?
With moving, seeking hands they paced the path
Beside the wall until—"Great Zeus be praised!"
Rejoiced Leonidas—"The gate is found!"

Lightly laughed Miriam, and shook the dust
Of Eleazar's vineyard from her feet.

The massive gate upon its hinges moaned,
Then Miriam and Leonidas, her Love,
Passed from the vineyard out into the night.

Slowly, the moon sank in the darkening West,
Slowly, the storm-clouds gathered in the sky.
And one by one the pale stars disappeared.
The house of Eleazar stood more gaunt ;
More black the olive-trees against the gloom.
Hushed was the nightingale, and overhead
A hungry vulture flew to Golgotha.

High from the Fortress of Antonia
The watchman called the Middle Watch of Night.

Then, the grim door of Eleazar's house
Moved stealthily—and opened to the dark.

MORNING

MORNING



HE sun-crowned morning woke
Jerusalem.

The mountains round about rose
in the light

With myriad colours clad ; the wooded slopes
And vineyards, where the clustered purple
grapes

Waited the wine-press, revelled in the sun.

Upon the verdant hills, wild-flower besprent,

The softly-stirring grey-green olive-trees

Welcomed the wayfarer with ripened fruit.

Low laughed the blossoming and fragrant
earth,

Serenely azure arched the boundless sky,

Save for one fleecy cloud on Olivet.

Within the city, busy life began.

Men thronged the thoroughfares and market-
place,

To buy and sell with bargaining exchange ;

The money-lenders and the merchants met ;

The dark-eyed women purchased the white
doves ;

And in and out the gates the soldiers passed ;

Gay singing shepherds led their fleecy sheep ;

And comely maidens bore their water-jars

Fresh from the dipping in some cooling stream.

Through the great city moved the human tide

Or loitered in the market by the Pool,

To watch the cattle and the blinking sheep

Within the shambles.

High upon its hill,

Above the city, and the busy throng,

The holy Temple stood—exceeding white ;

This was the glory of Jerusalem ;

Her shining and majestic civic crown ;
Men came and went—and saw the Temple there.

Through the long narrow street, that upward
led

To the great Temple from the market-place,
A motley crowd of women and of men
Came surging on, with loud discordant cries.
First, walked the Scribes and Pharisees, who
seemed

Unmindful of the praising populace ;
Their silken garments rustled as they moved ;
To broad phylacteries their heads inclined,
The while their eyes, beneath the lowered lids,
Were quick to mark each movement of the
crowd.

Behind the Pharisees and Scribes, unbound,
Was Miriam. Her wimple torn away,
Her hair in pity veiled her nakedness

Where ruthless men had clutched and rent her
robe.

Footsore and weary she had journeyed far—
For they had taken her beyond the gates,
Between the passing of the night and dawn.
No halting tremor in her frame betrayed
Her wearinesss, her desolate degree ;
Proudly she walked, defiant, beautiful ;
Deaf to the taunting jeers and mockery
Flung by the men and women in her face.
The men's eyes held for her remorselessness ;
The women's hate, which was to envy kin ;
Beauty like hers was trespass in their sight.

“ Death ! Death ! ”—The solemn word was
lightly tossed
From lip to lip, precursor of the stones ;
And little children, smiling as they ran—
Their faces merry with abounding life—
In laughing echo lisped the grim word “ death.”

But, in their midst, with proud imperious step,
Walked Miriam, undaunted, to her doom.
For love triumphant vanquished every fear.
Her hand was laid in rapture on her breast,
As though she guarded there a memory.
Her eyes—rebellious, unashamed—flashed keen
On her accusers through her dusky hair.

Was this the Miriam whose fine reserve
Had bid her seek a covert from her thought,
When first Love stirred within her heart's pure
fane—

Who ever held her stern lord's honour high?

Now Love had led her by sweet devious paths
To Love's supreme surrender. Passionless
As virgin mountain snow her sleeping heart,
Until she knew Leonidas and Love—
And gave to him her woman-trust—herself—
With living Love's consummate unreserve.

Before she passed from out the dwelling-house
Of Eleazar—to Leonidas,
She would have called her wish to go a sin—
Temptation, ere the yielding, seemed more black
Than, in the yielding, sweet surrender seemed—
But now, at bay, led on to stony death,
She held high counsel with her throbbing heart
To vindicate and justify her love—
The fountain in the desert of her life,
The grove of palms in dreary waste of sand,
Her burning bush—Jehovah's gift to her.
Could any guerdon for that gift be sin?

She looked her fierce accusers in the face,
And smiled in mockery that fired their wrath.

Leonidas was right. Love is of God ;
A broken law for Love is better far
Than formal bondage to an earthly bond.
All things are righteous when the sacred oil

Waiting within the lamp of life is Love ;
He is the bridegroom who that lamp can light.
Why should she falter when no sin was hers ?
What potency has death to conquer her ?
Love wings her spirit to outsoar the dark.

Up the long slope to the great Temple gate,
O'erlaid with silver and with beaten gold,
The cruel crowd surged on to find the Christ.

Cool were the polished cloisters where they
 passed,
Cool was the splendid Porch of Solomon,
A marble shelter from the Syrian sun.
There loitered idle worshippers, who came
For careless prayer, and stayed to lounge and
 gaze
From the high open spaces—whence was spread
A scene of bounteous beauty.

To the East,
The glowing sun-bathed hills rolled far away
Merging, at last, into the morning sky ;
The smiling valley, verdure-clothed, lay wide
At Mount Moriah's foot ; and that still Pool
Where angels hovered with their healing wings.

The lofty citadel Antonia,
Above the Tyropæon way, rose strong,
To throw defiant shadows at the sun.
Beyond the tower, the iridescent gleam
Of purple, gold and crimson, showed the place
Where Herod's palace marked the rule of Rome ;
And brazen eagles, glittering in the light,
Defined the Forum on its lowly hill.

Between the stately pillars of the Porch
The rabble moved. The careless loiterers
Transferred their idle gaze to Miriam,
Rehearsing with loud laugh and ribald jest,

Her beauty, point by point, as dealer hawks
In slave-market the beauties of the slave.
And from the booths, where sacrificial lambs
Waited the purchaser, the crafty Jews—
Who made the Temple house of merchandise—
Babbled of bitter water and the curse.
But with high-lifted head walked Miriam,
Crushing the taunts beneath her sandalled feet.

Before the great Corinthian Gate she paused,
Her haughty spirit faltered there ; beyond
The holy mystic broidered Veil, the Ark—
O'ershadowed by the Cherubim—reposed ;
Thus thought she, knowing not, as yet, that now,
Without the Veil, the Mercy-Seat was nigh.

It was but for a moment, then, once more,
Her pride possessed her, and her deep disdain ;
Proudly, with slow imperious step, she passed
Through the Corinthian Gate into the Court.

A sudden silence on the rabble fell.
The Pharisees and Scribes—who made vain
boast
That in their righteousness they heeded none—
Stopped in their path and checked their speech
to hear.

There, by the Treasury, the Master sat
And taught the multitude. As those who thirst
Drink water pure and clear, so, deeply drank
The multitude the Master's living words.

To penetrate the heart His wondrous voice
Had virtue. It was like to sound of surf
Low-lapping softly on a quiet shore,
Like murmuring forests and the song of birds—
A throb of joy, a note of poignancy
Commingled in its music. It recalled
To Miriam a memory of spring,

Of her glad girlhood and of her dear home,
Far off beside the Galilean Sea.

Straight was her weary storm-tossed soul
aroused !

She well divined here was a righteous judge,
A man beyond the petty throng who played
With law and justice for their own advance.

Her hand outstretched in eager supplance,
One swift appealing cry broke from her lips.

The Master still spoke on, nor ceased His word ;
He only turned His face to Miriam—
And looked upon her.

The appealing cry
Was hushed ; her hand its supplance forgot
Before the mastery of His calm eyes.
Within those eyes, compelling and august,

There burned a power to overcome the world,
All-potent to persuade mankind to crown
Him over Cæsar, if He willed to rule ;
But potent, also, with sublimer power
Mere earthly conquest to forgo—and wait.

Oh, those incomparable majestic eyes !
They touched the very soul of Miriam
With searching flame.

As wonder-awed she gazed,
Her fierce defiance slowly ebbcd—and died—
Her bitterness, her wrath, like demons ran,
And left her emptied of her former self.
Silent as Temple pillar carven fair
With pomegranates, she stood, like one stone-
bound.

Then—on a sudden—tremors seized her frame ;
Her eyes were veiled with mist of welling tears.

Behold ! As with the coming of new life
The unborn babe stirs in the womb, softly
At first, so, softly, deep in Miriam
Her spirit stirred, and all her being thrilled,
Not knowing what it meant, nor whence it came.
She waited—wondering—and lo ! her soul
Sprang to its stature—quicken—born again,
Spirit from spirit, conscious of new life,
And of the dower of Immortality.

In that swift moment of immortal birth
She saw the Unseen—and she *knew* the Word.

Vain were all human arguments and creeds ;
What though the Law of Moses, made of old
Within the wilderness, was now outworn !
There is a *higher* law, engraven deep
Upon the heart—the everlasting law
Of circled good, eternal harmony,
That orbs the purpose of the will of God.

Lo ! on a sudden, *far above all law*,
She saw supernal light—and understood.

Swift as an eagle mounteth to his crag,
The vision rayed to her of purity
For *beauty's* sake—*without a thought of law* ;
A vision of diviner model, robed
In symmetry and garmented with grace,
Which moves with steadfast purpose like a star
Poised in its course on the celestial way.

Her new-born spirit saw beyond the hour—
Immortal life, indeed, is not fulfilled
In the fulfilling of a dear desire ;
There are supreamer issues than the flesh—
Life's glory lieth in the victory
Of living spirit over mortal flesh.

For freedom she had ~~cried~~, and now—in truth,
From bondage unto bondage she had passed.

Flesh hath its bondage, binding as the law ;
When swayed by Love, it is more tyrannous.

As one who stands on lofty mountain peak,
After long climbing through the hiding mists—
Beholds the stretch of valley and of hills
Beneath his searching eyes unroll itself,
Thus Miriam straightway discerned anew
The finer balances of great and less ;
The world spread vaster than a single heart.
So sharp her pain had been, her little round
Of so great measure in her own esteem,
Her love of such deep import ; now, at last,
She saw beyond the confines of her love,
And compassed larger places in her thought.
Of small account seemed Miriam the Jew
In that quick vision of the universe.

Her eyes were opened, and she read in His
A new Beatitude transcending law—

The blessing of a heart beneficent,
Too merciful and wide to lay the weight
Of any burden on a fellow man,
Or take self's joy unmindful of his pain.
How sordid and how niggard was the soul
That stayed to measure guerdons by the gift !
How bounteous the largess of a soul
That takes no thought of self or self's delight !
The truth was manifest to her—she knew
That broken law, for which she was condemned,
Was but a tithe of sin that she had sinned ;
A broken law is only broken law,
But love of self is shame unto the soul,
A nay to God's prerogative to man.

Like homing birds—new wingèd thoughts flew
fast.

To subtle pleas which had persuaded her
Quick answers came in silence from His eyes,
In very language of her human love.

King David, his Bathsheba—and their son?
The motherhood within her heart cried out—
What answer could Love give to any child
Brought forth in fear to the reproach of
man?

Foredoomed at birth the mighty Solomon;
Child of the flesh—flesh overmastered him—
And to a child of Love there is a debt
Owed by the very Love that brings it forth.
In every child of Love the flesh must be
Infused with spirit and endowed with light.

But—sharpest of the vivid strokes that flashed—
The keen new knowledge pierced that e'en her
love

Had failed in fulness to fulfil itself.
Love hath been ever foreordained to be
Of all things paramount—but they who love
Must seek for what is paramount in Love,
Else will they lose, in gaining, what they seek.

What were those words that she had called her
love,

In vindicating counsel with herself?—

Her “burning bush,” “Jehovah-sent” “divine?”—

Could aught divine a brand of fire ignite

To scorch with wrath in Eleazar's breast?

Could aught divine send forth a dissonance—

And break the cosmic harmony of life?

Ah—nay. Love holds its obligation high

To be a benison to all who come

Within the circle of its radiance.

The highest love can hold the least excuse

To be the cause of harm to any man.

Transfigured by its immortality

It lighteth all the borders of the home,

And of the soul it maketh Sanctuary.

With new prophetic vision she discerned

That Love—to keep its rapture and its bloom—

Must be close-guarded with a fine reserve.
To have is oft to lose—the quaffed cup holds
No promise of sweet wine. O Fools and blind—
To take the less for more, the passing day
For an eternity of triune joy !
Better long æons of pure ecstasy
Than transient moments of voluptuous bliss,
Which burn to leave dead ashes in their track.

Who was this Man—who spake as no man
spake ?

Prophet—High-Priest—or an incarnate God ?
She knew not—this she knew—His seeing eyes
Had unsealed hers—the carnal veil was rent,
And with apocalyptic radiance
She saw Life's Image, incorruptible,
Stand forth in triune majesty serene,
Empanoplied in splendour, holding high
A torch of light unquenchable ; unbound
And fetterless, outsoaring *every* chain ;

Free with a perfect freedom—free from law,
Its bondage and its fear—but free as well
From bondage unto man, his power to hurt,
And from the Nemesis of selfish love.

She knew, with sudden knowledge of the soul,
This human life and human love were given—
As man's great opportunity—to reach
The stature of that Image crowned on high.

Leonidas had told her of the Greek
Who carved for Greece a goddess without blot—
May not a man do more with his own soul,
And with the living forces in himself,
Than he can do with marble or with stone?

This Man, with whom she now stood face to face,
Had gained the Image incorruptible ;
It shone from Him with quiet certitude,
Impalpable as ether, but as sure.

If He had gained it, then she might have gained;
And she had lost it in her selfish bliss,
Dwarfing the measure of her living soul.

She saw, at last, what Life was meant to be—
And, seeing, knew what Love could be in Life.

O heaven-born Love—unchallenged by desire—
Immortal, spirit-winged, all-beautiful!

Then spake to Christ the Pharisees and Scribes—
“This woman, Master, in adultery
Hath taken been; yea, in the very act;
Now in the Law we are commanded such
To stone to death; what sayest Thou of her?”

No answer came.

Slowly, the Master stooped
And with His finger wrote upon the ground.

The Pharisees and Scribes thought, as He wrote,
He heard them not ; but Miriam's own heart
Told her He heard—Who did not need to hear.

Again they questioned Him, the while they
clutched

With hungry zeal imaginary stones—

Impatient to fulfil their savage mood

With cruelty they justified by Law.

Then through the Temple rang that wondrous
Voice :

“ He that among you hath not sinned, let him
First cast a stone at her.”

Once more He stooped
And wrote upon the unrecording ground.

On the impatient throng deep silence fell.

For death by stones, then Miriam prepared ;

Soon would they lead her out beyond the gates;
Each quivering nerve throbbed with expectancy.
Stones! They would bruise and sully her white
flesh.

Stones! They would crush her to a sightless mass.
And yet, she feared them not as now she feared
The Master's eyes ; with her own eyes she made
A covenant to keep them veiled from His.
E'en in the very agony of death,
Still would she hide them from that gaze austere,
Lest, peradventure, she should there confront
A probing pain more bitter to be borne.

Slowly, without a word, the Pharisees
And Scribes began to slink away, o'ercome
With conscious guilt; and women, who full well
Had kept the law, ran to escape their hearts.

The echo of their footsteps Miriam heard
From the far cloisters and the distant courts,

But with her eyes she kept her covenant ;
Naught should persuade or tempt her to endure
Once more the terror of those quiet eyes ;
Living or dying she would hide her own ;
Nay, she would never lift them unto His—
“ Woman,” He said,—straightway she lifted
them—

“Where are those thine accusers? Hath no man
Condemnèd thee?”

Lo! there was no man there
Within the Court ; each had departed thence
Unto his place and left her with the Christ.

Then Miriam made answer, “ No man, Lord,”
And stood in silence—waiting His decree.

No stones! Nay, there would be no stones, she
knew ;

He was not Scribe nor Pharisee nor Priest—

Yet her awakened soul became aware
That He was sinless—and He was her judge.
What fatal words would crush her in their
stead?

But while she quivered with a nameless fear,
Into the darkness of her shadowed heart,
Straight as an arrow flieth glad hope flew
Winged with the prescience that He came to
bless—

For, in the second look in those deep eyes,
She saw not only sorrow for her sin
But pity—infinite, compassionate,
Divine : clear-seeing of her life and love—
The Wherefore and the Why of her estate—
The lures that led her to this fatal pass—
The wrong in blindness she had called the
right—

Her strife with wrong and no man helping her,
Yea, e'en the rapture and the tempting bliss

That had o'erswept her frail humanity—
She saw compassion for it all in Him.
She saw that He, and He alone, could know
How woman loves.

Quick consolation soothed
Her passionate pain—her poignant memory.
Oh, blessed balm to be thus known! That
heart

Which freely gave him all, Leonidas
Had understood not when he swayed it most.
What heart can see another heart's deep shrine
Close-hidden from itself—so far—so deep?

Oh, the long hunger! The untutored child—
The veiled maiden on Life's threshold stone—
The unveiled woman, reaching out to love—
The yearning for true marriage of the soul,
Wherein the perfect knowledge brings the
peace.

Last night, within the garden, it was near.
And then—and then Desire had come between—
And in Desire that dearer bond of soul
Had slipped away—been lost—and her proud
heart

Was veiled again—for no man understood,
Nay, least—oh, least of all!—Leonidas.
But now that unveiled heart's most secret shrine,
Its hidden mystery, its lonely depths,
Lay open to those penetrating eyes ;
He knew, He pitied, and He understood.

The Pharisees and Scribes she had defied,
But to the bar of this pure Judge, she turned
Without a protest—to be judged by Him.

Judged—*And by Him !—*

Hope shuddered back to fear ;
Her consolation shrank again to dread.

What though He pitied—understood—and knew
The secrets of her heart! He also knew,
As none could know, the measure of her sin.

For all transgressors condemnation waits ;
'Tis harshest from the righteous ; he is wont
To be least merciful who is most strict.
She saw her patriarchal father stand
Beside the portal of her girlhood home—
Remembering his vaunted rectitude
She knew he would be pitiless to her.
The great High Priest, with sacerdotal wrath,
Would curse her at the Altar, in God's name,
Then send her forth to die.

And He—the Christ—
Was *sinless* ! Terror gripped her hard and awe
Encompassed her. To that unsullied soul
Walking in whiteness, her offence would loom
Unspeakable in blackness. He would judge
Not by the Law but by Eternal Light.

In love she had outlived the fear of Law ;
But condemnation from this Lord of Light
Was matchless in its magnitude of pain.
Her quickened conscience knew, at last, the
depth

Of her offence—grave sin against the Light—
Her love had cast the shadow of itself
Upon the world that needs illumining.
Nor had she held a beacon in the dark
To lead her lover to a larger place—
Love's duty unto Love—to Man—to God.
Oh, if the deep seas would but bury her—
The towering mountains hide her, ere once
more
She hears that Voice—that tender mighty
Voice!

To the far distance of the Temple, sounds
Have ebbed away, and all the place is still—
Still as the silence of mortality.

Alone, they two are standing in the Court—
He, the immaculate sin-conquering Christ,
And she, the sinner, taken in her sin.

Prostrate before the presence of the Christ
Low cowers Miriam to meet her doom—
And as she trembling waits to hear the dread
Anathema—He speaks—

“Neither do I
Condemn thee—Go—and sin no more.”



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